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AUTHOR Anderson, Thomas H.; York, Scott B.
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CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTRAMURAL STUDENTS IN A LARGE MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Thomas H. Anderson
Scott B. York

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Division of University Extension

Urbana, Illinois

1971

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A survey method of investigation was used to compare characteristics of students taking extramural classes in 1960 with those in 1971. A sample size of approximately 2,500 students is represented in the statistics. It was found that the percentage of students taking undergraduate courses had dramatically declined since the 1960 survey while the percentage of graduate students had almost doubled. Also, a larger percentage of urban students and of female students was reported in 1971 than in 1960. The annual mean salary of students in 1971 was $11,526, approximately double that of students in 1960. The 1971 students were more inclined to take courses for (1) advancement and (2) to improve performance, and less inclined to take courses (1) to become better citizens, (2) for personal satisfaction, (3) for advanced degrees, or (4) for teachers certificates, than were the 1960 students.

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Thomas H. Anderson
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Division of University Extension
University of Illinois, Urbana - Champaign

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The purpose of this survey was to collect information about some of the biographical, demographic and educational variables thought to be characteristic of extramural students. It was hoped that such data would be significant for future planning for extramural programs.

The term extramural students refers to those students who enroll in courses conducted by the Division of University Extension primarily at locations other than the Chicago or Champaign-Urbana campuses. The term does not refer to students enrolled in conferences and institutes, short courses, or correspondence study courses. The extramural class program includes both undergraduate and graduate credit courses as well as college-level credit-free courses.

The analysis and discussion of data will closely follow the format used in a similiar study (Carter, Kerr, and York, 1962). Since the data for the 1962 study were collected in 1960, the year 1960 will be used to refer to the results of the Carter et. al. investigation. While new items were added, many of the items utilized in the questionnaire developed by Carter et. al. (1960) were used to collect the present data. Direct comparisons of some results were thereby possible.

The Sample

All extramural classes, except those taught over the Univex-Net by telephone, which were scheduled for the fall of 1971 and in session at the time the questionnaire was distributed were included in this study. Two hundred thirty-nine

classes were scheduled and 226 were in session, while 13 eight-week courses had terminated prior to the distribution of the questionnaire. These 226 classes constitute the sample for this study. Four thousand nine hundred eighty-seven students were enrolled in these 226 classes.

Data were collected by means of an eighteen-item questionnaire which was administered by the instructors and intended for all extramural students. In addition, graduate students were asked to complete an additional ten items. Honest and sincere responses to all items were encouraged by the anonymous nature of the questionnaire.

One hundred sixty-five (73%) of the 226 instructors returned completed questionnaires. Two thousand eight hundred four of a possible 4987 students completed the questionnaire, a 56.2% return.

Classification of Students

Three major classifications of students, i.e., graduate students, undergraduates, and students either auditing courses or enrolled in credit-free classes, are used in most comparisons. Shown in Table 1 are the percentages of the population in each of the three categories. The results indicate that the percentage of graduate students enrolled in extramural classes was much larger in 1971 than in the 1960 survey, while the percentage of undergraduate students decreased drastically. A comparison with yearly course enrollments indicates that this difference is a major trend in the classification of extramural students.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1

Classification of extramural students

	Year of survey			
	1960		1971	
Classification	N	%	N	%
graduate	895	25.3	1211	50.4
undergraduate	967	27.4	209	8.7
credit-free or audit	1673	47.3	983	40.9
totals	3535		2403	

Demographic Variables

The ages of extramural students in 1971 are similar to those of the students in 1960. Shown in Table 2 is the distribution of ages and the mean ages for each classification. The mean ages reported in the 1960 study do not always coincide with those computed in the present investigation. The discrepancies in ages can be accounted for by different computational procedures.

Reported in Table 2 are the ages of extramural students in 1960 and 1971. The only major difference illustrated in Table 2 is the slight increase in age of undergraduate students between the 1960 and 1971 entries. The age comparisons of students enrolled in graduate and credit-free courses show no large differences.

Insert Table 2 about here

Presented in Table 3 are the population figures of the communities in which extramural students lived. A comparison of the 1960 and 1971 data reveals a decrease in the percentage of students in the areas with populations of less than 10,000 and an increase in those areas having a population greater that 50,000. In fact, approximately 43% of the students in 1971 claimed residence in areas with populations greater than 50,000, as compared to 36% in 1960.

Insert Table 3 about here

Data from Table 4 suggest that the marital status percentages have remained relatively stable when comparing the 1960 and 1971 samples, with the possible

Table 2

Ages of extramural students

	Classification of students							
	graduate		undergraduate		credit-free or audit		total	
Age in years	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971
16 - 25	19.9%	17.2%	36.8%	16.0%	10.2%	9.0%	633	321
26 - 35	38.9%	42.6%	28.3%	34.5%	37.0%	34.3%	1099	898
36 - 45	22.9%	23.1%	20.6%	30.0%	30.4%	26.3%	806	583
46 - 55	15.1%	13.6%	11.7%	13.0%	16.2%	23.1%	460	406
56 - 65	3.1%	3.5%	2.6%	6.0%	5.6%	6.4%	130	114
66 or older	.1%	.0%	.1%	.5%	.6%	.9%	11	10
mean age	34.29	34.36	31.57	36.0	37.1	38.6	34.86	36.24

Table 3

Population of residence of extramural students

Population of place of residence	Classification of students: graduate 1960	graduate 1971	undergraduate 1960	undergraduate 1971	credit-free or audit 1960	credit-free or audit 1971	total 1960	total 1971
rural	12.9%	7.5%	15.9%	7.2%	10.9%	9.2%	435	194
less than 10,000	20.6%	13.5%	19.2%	11.1%	15.7%	16.9%	611	349
10,000-50,000	32.6%	32.8%	39.0%	41.3%	31.2%	33.3%	1147	804
over 50,000	33.9%	46.2%	25.8%	40.4%	42.2%	40.7%	1212	1036

exception of the undergraduate students. There seemed to be a larger percentage of undergraduates who were married in 1971 than there were in 1960. In general, approximately 75% of the students who participate in the extramural program are married.

Insert Table 4 about here

Additionally, it can be noted from the results in Table 5 that women composed a larger percentage of students in the graduate and undergraduate classifications in 1971 than they did in 1960. The majority of male students in the credit-free courses increased from 67% in 1960 to approximately 71% in 1971.

Insert Table 5 about here

A comparison of the annual salaries of extramural students is shown in Table 6. The data show that the students who now take extramural courses have salaries which are approximately double those of 11 years ago. The measure of central tendency used in 1960 was that of a modal comparison, and when those measures are compared with the 1971 data it is obvious that the salaries have doubled. The data also show that approximately one-half of the 1971 extramural students report annual salaries of $10,000 or greater.

Insert Table 6 about here

Table 4

Marital status of extramural students

	Classification of students							
	graduate		undergraduate		credit-free or audit		totals (N)	
Marital status	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971
married	70.0%	70.6%	62.0%	75%	82.8%	80.6%	2589	1795
single	30.0%	29.4%	38.0%	25%	17.2%	19.4%	915	595
totals (N)	886	1205	959	208	1659	977	3504	2390

Table 5

Sex of extramural students

	Classification of students					
	graduate		undergraduate		credit-free or audit	
Sex of students	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971
male	67%	52%	67%	50%	67%	71%
female	33%	48%	33%	50%	33%	29%

Table 6

A comparison of annual salaries
of extramural students in dollars

	Classification of students							
	graduate		undergraduate		credit-free or audit		total	
	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971
modal salary*	5,000-5,999	10,000-10,999	4,000-4,999	10,000-10,999	5,000-5,999	12,000-12,999	5,000-5,999	10,000-10,999
mean salary	-------		------		-----		-----	11,526
median salary	-------		------		-----		-----	10,050

*based on $1000 intervals

The primary subject-matter interests of extramural students are shown in Table 7. Of special interest relative to the 11 year period are: (1) the overall decrease in interest in education, mathematics, and science areas; and (2) the sharp increase in interest in credit-free engineering courses.

Insert Table 7 about here

Educational Considerations of Extramural Students

Shown in Table 8 is a list of reasons why students say they enrolled in extramural courses. The results suggest that the 1971 students were more inclined to take courses for (1) advancement and, (2) to improve performance, and less inclined to take courses, (1) to become better citizens, (2) for personal satisfaction, (3) for an advanced degrees, or (4) for teachers certificates, than were the 1960 students.

Insert Table 8 about here

Data from students who were working toward degrees show that 78% were working toward the master's degree and 22% toward the doctorate or advanced certificate degrees. The corresponding percentages in 1960 were 79.1% and 20.9%, respectively. Approximately 50% of the graduate students reported that they had begun their work through extramural courses. In 1960, 56% of the students had begun their work in extramural courses.

Presented in Table 9 are the results achieved when students were asked to rate the

Table 7

Primary subject matter interests
of extramural students

Subject matter area	Classification of students: graduate 1960	graduate 1971	undergraduate 1960	undergraduate 1971	credit-free or audit 1960	credit-free or audit 1971	total (N) 1960	total (N) 1971
agriculture	9.4	3.7	2.3	4.0	2.2	1.5	132	66
arts and crafts*	3.5	1.3	5.6	4.0	6.4	6.7	281	87
arts and music*		7.1		6.4		2.5		122
business administration	3.0	3.3	15.5	13.4	20.7	17.0	418	227
education	54.1	43.6	23.3	22.3	10.8	3.2	827	595
engineering	4.6	4.1	9.0	4.0	18.1	34.3	343	381
English and speech	---	2.7	---	5.9	----	2.0	---	63
foreign languages	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.0	0	.6	27	23
home economics	.7	1.8	.1	1.5	7.0	1.9	93	43
humanities	---	.6	---	2.0	---	2.2	---	32
psychology and sociology	---	9.4	---	8.9	---	6.9	---	195
mathematics	5.5	1.6	7.8	1.0	1.1	1.5	132	35
science	9.3	1.6	18.0	2.5	6.5	2.0	323	43
social science	---	6.3	---	4.0	---	1.9	---	101
other	8.4	11.6	16.9	19.3	27.2	15.7	437	325
totals (N)	906	1192	881	202	1226	944	3013	2338

*Classified only under the heading of Arts in the 1960 survey

Table 8

Reasons extramural students reported for continuing their education

	Classification of students							
	graduate		undergraduate		credit-free or audit		totals (N)	
Reasons	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971
advancement	18.2	25.1	16.2	19.4	20.1	26.2	1448	860
wholesome activity	4.6	3.8	5.7	6.0	8.3	5.6	506	161
improve performance	25.1	32.0	16.2	25.7	29.5	29.8	1919	1053
better citizen	8.8	4.1	11.9	5.0	12.2	8.3	871	198
personal satisfaction	15.9	14.5	20.4	17.4	26.7	21.6	1701	599
advance degree	22.4	15.8	15.3	12.4	2.3	2.2	946	357
teachers certificate	5.0	2.8	13.3	11.7	.9	1.0	441	100
other	0	1.8	1.0	2.3	0	5.3	21	109
totals (N)	2389		2199		3265		7853	3437

quality of graduate extramural courses as compared with residence work. Approximately 6% of the students rated extramural courses to be inferior and 17% rated them to be superior to residence offerings. Compared to the 1960 data, these statistics indicate improvement in the quality of the extramural offerings in comparison with residence courses.

Insert Table 9 about here

When asked about the adequacy of the number of graduate extension courses, 75% of the students reported that the number was not adequate. In 1960, 72% reported that the number was not adequate.

How do extramural students learn of the course in which they enroll? The most effective media are, (1) the extension bulletin, (2) friends, and (3) employers. More conventional advertising media such as newspapers, television, and radio are relatively ineffective, especially as suggested by the 1971 data. See Table 10.

Insert Table 10 about here

Of special interest are the facts that, (1) the extension bulletin became more effective, (2) friends became more effective, and, (3) the employer became less effective as advertising sources of extramural classes in 1971 than in 1960.

Table 9

Students perceptions of the quality of extension graduate work as compared with residence graduate work

	Year of survey			
	1960		1971	
Ratings	N	%	N	%
inferior	51	6.6	61	5.9
equal	407	52.3	505	48.6
superior	82	10.5	176	16.9
uncertain	238	30.6	297	28.6
totals	778		1039	

Table 10

Manner in which extramural students learned of course in which they enrolled

	Classification of student							
	graduate		undergraduate		credit-free or audit		totals(N)	
Learned of course by	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971	1960	1971
extension bulletin and announcement	51.7	60.3	46.5	44.2	21.1	26.5	1096	1048
newspaper	4.0	1.5	11.9	5.3	12.5	3.8	285	64
radio	0	0	0	0	.1	.1	1	1
television	0	0	0	0	0	.1	0	1
friends	14.7	19.1	14.1	23.3	10.2	20.8	369	472
employer	17.3	9.9	20.7	11.6	40.7	27.9	812	410
other sourses	12.3	9.1	6.8	16.0	15.4	20.8	349	341
totals(N)	860	1160	860	206	1192	971	2912	2337

It was concluded from opinion data concerning library facilities in extramural classes that approximately 42.6% of the students were satisfied with the facilities. A comparison with the 1960 survey indicates that 9% more students were satisfied with the facilities in 1971 and that 15.5% fewer students indicated a negative opinion in 1971. These changes reflect efforts by extramural personnel to develop a more adequate library system, as well as better usage by members of the teaching faculty.

Summary

1. The percentage of extramural students taking undergraduate courses has dramatically declined since the 1960 survey. The percentage of graduate students taking courses has almost doubled.
2. In general, the ages of extramural students in 1971 are similar to those in 1960, with the possible exception of the undergraduate students. The 1971 undergraduates seem to be about 4.5 years older, on the average, than their 1960 counterparts.
3. A larger percentage of extramural students in 1971 than in 1960 are from large urban areas.
4. In 1971, there was a larger percentage of women taking courses than in 1960. The percentage of women was approximately 50% for the credit offerings in 1971.
5. The annual salary of the students in 1971 was approximately double that of the students in 1960. The median annual salary in 1971 was $10,050, and the mean annual salary was $11,526.
6. The 1971 students were more inclined to take courses for, (1) advancement and (2) to improve performance, and less inclined to take courses, (1) to become better citizens, (2) for personal satisfaction, (3) for advanced degrees, or (4) for teachers certificates, than were the 1960 students.
7. The most effective advertising media for extramural courses seem to be, (1) the extension bulletin, (2) friends, and (3) employers. More conventional media such as newspapers, television, and radio are relatively ineffective, especially as indicated by the 1971 data.

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Carter, G. C., Kerr, W. D., and York, S. B. Characteristics of extramural students. Adult Education, 1962, 12 (4), 223-230.

VITA

Anderson, Thomas H.

Address: Department of Educational Psychology
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Title: Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology
and in Extension Education

Degrees: B.A., Antioch College
M.A., Ed.D., University of Illinois

Specialization: Adult learning, educational measurement
and statistics